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ABSTRACT

Although the majority of school administrators in the United States are employed by their states, a growing number are needed to run institutions in the private sector. As demand for private- and parochial-school education increases, so too will demand for those trained to run them. Universities ignore differences between public- and private-school administration and teach only to those destined for public-school service. This article explores the inherent differences between public and private schools and asserts that private-school administrators are faced with unique challenges that differ significantly from their public counterparts and for which they have had no preservice training. A few differences include the private-school principal having greater authority over school activities, greater control over hiring and firing of teachers, and jurisdiction over the entire school budget for every aspect of the school's function. It is suggested that universities begin considering alternatives to cookie-cutter training programs and offer more appropriate opportunities for the aspiring private-school administrator, such as courses that explore school and community relations, business finance rather than school finance, and law for private schools. (Contains 15 references.) (RT)

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Private School Administration;

A New Challenge for Graduate Training Programs

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Abstract

While the majority of school administrators in the U.S. are employed by their states, a growing number are needed to run institutions in the private sector. As the demand for private and parochial school education increases, so too will the demand for those trained to run them. Universities ignore the differences between public and private school administration and teach only to the present majority--those destined for public school service.

This article explores the inherent differences between public and private schools and asserts that private school administrators are faced with unique challenges, for which they've had no pre-service training.

It is suggested that universities begin considering alternatives to cookie-cutter training programs and offer more appropriate opportunities for the aspiring *private* school administrator

Private School Administration;

A New Challenge for Graduate Training Programs

While the majority of school administrators in the United States are employed by their states' departments of public education, a growing number of education specialists are needed to run institutions in the private sector. As the demand for private and parochial school education increases, so too will the demand for those trained to run them. Thus far, universities in the United States have ignored the fact that preservice training needs for private school administrators differ from those of public-bound administrators.

This article does not attempt to discuss the merits of either private or public education. Nor does it attempt to establish the superiority of one over the other, but rather to assert that, for better or worse, they are most assuredly two different animals.

The media has devoted much attention in recent decades to the assertion that Americans are loosing confidence in public education. We are not attempting to verify to what extent this may or may not be true. However, with some

states already instituting trial voucher programs and Congress considering similar actions such as tax-credits for private school tuition, it stands to reason that the demand for private school will only continue to increase.

Upon establishing these premises, it is suggested that the training received by those aspiring to administer schools need not be of the cookie-cutter variety. Furthermore, those with career plans targeted specifically toward private education would best be served by courses designed with them in mind. We pose the question, "Why don't universities presently offer instruction or even information for those destined for service in private schools?" Graduate courses in administration avoid the mention of differences between private and public administration, much less offering content that would better prepare graduates for careers in non-public education.

Currently, institutions of higher education do not train administrators for the unique challenges faced in private and parochial schools. This article asserts that universities offering an education administration degree program should consider broadening their scope to include the special administrative needs of private and parochial

schools. It is estimated that currently only 50% of private school administrators have completed university-level administrator preparation programs.(Hughes, et al., 1999) When colleges begin offering effective training, private schools will be afforded a new option for recruiting qualified personnel to run their institutions.

Current Private v. Public populations

Private schools, defined here as those controlled by any non-governmental entity and financed from sources other than public taxation, have played an important role in American education since the Puritans landed at Massachusetts Bay. As government institutions began taking responsibility for education, the continued existence of private schools provided an opportunity for parents to exercise their freedom of choice in selecting education they deemed most appropriate for their children. Today, this freedom of choice still affords parents that same opportunity.

The National Center for Educational Statistics' (NCES) survey of the private schools during the 1997-1998 school year indicates that there were 27,402 private elementary and secondary schools in the United states. (McDonald,

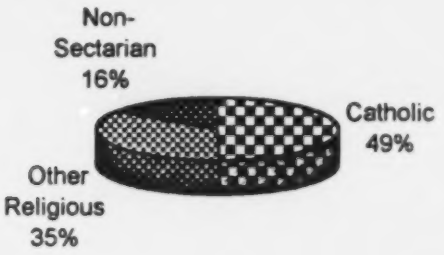
2001) That would mean that, a bare minimum of 27,402 administrators was required to run them. While only 10% of the total elementary and secondary student population are educated in private schools at this time, private schools do account for nearly one quarter of all American schools. (figure 1)

Private schools are categorized as *Catholic*, *other religious*, and *non-sectarian*. *Catholic schools* account for 29.9% of private schools, but educate about half (49.5%) of all private school students. Schools classified as *other religious* constitute 48.2% of the total number of private schools, educating 34.8% of private school students. *Nonsectarian schools* make up the remaining 22% of private schools and educate the remaining 15.7% of the students. (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999) (figures 2 and 3)

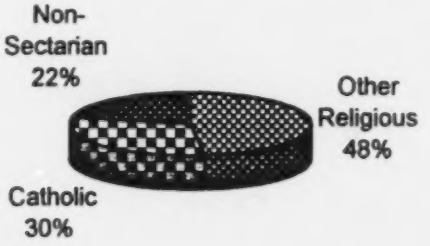
Some relevant changes have taken place within private education during the last 35 years. In 1965, Catholic education comprised approximately 68% of the schools and 87% of the private student population. Since then, religious schools of other denominations have grown rapidly while the numbers of Catholic and nonsectarian schools inched along slowly. Other religious schools tend to be

(Figure 1) Public vs. Private Schools in the United States

(figure 2) Private School Students



(figure 3) Private Schools by Type



small and therefore enroll a still smaller percentage of students than do the Catholic schools. (McDonald, 2001)

Growing Demand for Private Education?

While a quick glance at the overall numbers do not suggest a staggering swell in private school attendance, the truth lies elsewhere. Private school enrollment (about 10% of U.S. students) has not changed much in the last decade, however, it's getting harder for students to get into these existing schools. According to the National Association of Independent Schools, only 50% of all applicants were accepted into private schools in 1998-99 compared to over 61% ten years ago. (Paulson, 2001) Quite clearly, the demand is growing faster than the supply and that can not be expected to last forever. Eventually the market will be realized and the demand met.

Parents undoubtedly consider numerous factors when choosing between public and private education as well as when selecting from among the many private school options. Among these factors are the religious, educational, cultural and social values that may be integral parts of a school's mission.

There has been an ongoing debate in this country over the evidence that Catholic schools, and to a lesser extent other private schools, produce significantly greater gains in achievement than public schools. In *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, by Anthony Bryk (1993), Catholic school success is attributed to greater academic demands, more individual attention to students, and greater support for students by the school community. In that work, researchers also destroyed a number of myths about Catholic Education using inner-city urban schools to illustrate the heterogeneous populations of today's Catholic schools. They cited various New York schools; one made up of 88% non-Catholics and another which was 100% non-white. This reveals to us the far corners into which the demand for non-public education is reaching.

Others contend that discipline and values are the major reasons many parents--especially minorities in inner-city schools--opt for parochial schools. (Woodward and Chang, 1996) In their book *High School Achievement*, Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore (1982) estimated that the difference between Catholic and public school performance may be equivalent to as much as a full year of learning and the difference between other private and public performance

about half that. Although these conclusions have been challenged on many grounds (e.g., Goldberger and Cain, 1982) they have withstood the test of additional data collection. (Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman, 1984) Further debating the validity of this claim—supporting or not supporting *High School and Beyond* research—is not our purpose. However, the fact that controversy exists and that millions do believe the achievement claims to be valid, supports the contention here, that private school education is becoming more and more desirable by a wide variety of people.

There has been much said in recent years about Americans loosing confidence in public education. School violence, poor test performance, and high dropout rates are among the many reasons cited by those who express such discontent. There has been no significant research to suggest that this trend will not continue. Moreover, as the new presidential administration openly supports seeking options to aid families who choose private education, it stands to reason that the demand and therefore the supply of private education is in for an upswing in the 21st century.

Private vs. Public; How They Differ

In 1985, John Chubb and Terry Moe completed a study aimed at determining *why* private schools out-performed public schools. In their attempt, they surveyed principals in 500 of the schools included in the "High School and Beyond" study, and produced a detailed comparative description of public and private schools. Their descriptions, along with additional findings are presented here to illustrate our initial contention that the administration of private and public schools is so different that it is absurd to assume that identical training programs would benefit them equally.

Authorities and Publics

Although private and public schools differ greatly in the outside communities that control and influence them, they both nonetheless are subject to immediate outside authorities. Very few private high schools, even among the very small, exist entirely within the control of their own organization. A principal or headmaster is rarely the sole authority between the school and its parents. However, the significant difference lies with the question of *how much*

influence do these outside authorities have over the policies and operations of the school.

Based on the results of an "Administrator and Teacher Survey" given to 500 of the *High School and Beyond* schools, Chubb and Moe are able to offer some previously unsubstantiated insight into this question.(1985) The answer they found is shockingly consistent and statistically significant. In each of the private sectors—Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian—and for every single policy and practice questioned, the strongest outside authority (whatever that might be for each school) was found to be less influential than in the public sector. They also found that in the private sector, the strongest influence from an outside authority is weaker than the influence of the principal.

One of the largest degrees of difference was found in the hiring and firing of teachers. Where public school principals have very limited influence in this area—outside authorities usually holding the reins— private school principals most often have absolute control over their staff selection and maintenance. It may be assumed, therefore, that such skills are more critical for the private school administrator.

Also noted by Chubb and Moe was that, much to their surprise, although Catholic schools are part of a large system, they exist with much weaker outside influences than do the other types of private schools. According to Anna Larriviere, Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, the fact is, that Catholic school principals must answer to no one other than the parish pastor. Diocesan School superintendents and school officials, as well as individual school boards exist primarily in an advisory capacity and have no real "authority" over the operations of the school.(Larriviere, 2001) This may serve to illustrate that the administrator in a Catholic school, more closely resembles the CEO of a small corporation than the principal of a public school--which leads us to the conclusion that perhaps they should trained that way.

Policies are made at the diocesan level, however, which incorporate state mandates. Catholic schools like all other non-public schools are governed within their states by a commission and by a minimal set of state policies and mandates. Larriviere says that these mandates will remain uninhibiting as long as non-public schools continue to be excluded from MFP funding.

Chubb and Moe also found that more common to public school administrators is a relationship with their authorities that is excessively constrained by rules, norms, and standard operating procedures. They explain that such constraints often lead to the conflict of which many administrators complain. The results of the survey suggest that public school administrators desire the flexibility that ironically is found in their private school counterparts.

To be successful, every school needs and expects the cooperation and involvement of its parents. This can become a far greater complexity within the walls of a private school. Private school administrators must be prepared for unique situations. Often the limits of parent involvement are unclear not only to the parents but to those within the school as well. In practice, the most frustrating situations between private schools and their parents come from misunderstandings about the school's decision-making processes. (Association of Independent Maryland Schools, 2001) These misunderstandings are more common among non-public schools because decision-making processes vary from school to school. Most private schools have boards, the powers of which also vary greatly from

school to school. Often these boards do not serve as an appeals board or even a grievance board. Parents often make assumptions based on what they know to be true of the public school system.

When parents choose to enroll their child in a non-public school, they agree to subscribe to its mission, follow its rules, and abide by its decisions. This is not necessarily so when a student is enrolled in a public school. When parents do not agree with decisions made in a private school, they have very little recourse other than typical diplomacy. Not having any board to appeal to in most cases, the parents and the administrator are left with yet another alternative, unique to nonpublic schools--sending the child elsewhere for his education.

Legal Influences

Virtually every graduate program in educational administration requires coursework in school law. What is found in these courses however is not "school" law, but rather "public school" law. A keen understanding of the variances between private and public schools in this area is critical to the private school administrator.

A course in private school law would, undoubtedly, be as lengthy and complex a course as those designed for public school administrators. We can not attempt to address the intricacies of school law within the scope of this article. However, a brief overview of the most basic differences is presented in an effort to support our claim.

Federal constitutional law protects citizens from being deprived of certain rights and freedoms by governments and government officials. Constitutional law therefore protects students and teachers in public schools. However, because private schools are not government agencies, students and teachers in nonpublic schools voluntarily surrender certain constitutional protections while in that school. For instance, the First Amendment protects the freedom of speech; administrators in the public sector may not prohibit undesirable viewpoints from being expressed. Private school administrators, on the other hand, may legally restrict the speech of both students and teachers. (Shaughnessy, 1989) Such restriction is, of course, widely used within private education. Principals who must write and carry out such restrictive policies certainly will receive no training for such a delicate task in their university programs.

State constitutional laws, however, vary. In some cases, private schools can be compelled to comply with state constitutional requirements as long as the requirements do not infringe upon the rights of the private educational institution and can be shown to have some legitimate educational purpose. (Shaughnessy, 1989)

Legal considerations for the private school administrator are complex at best. While even "due process" is not required in the nonpublic school, administrators are encouraged to develop and implement procedures and policies that are legally and morally defendable.(Shaughnessy, 1989) The private school administrator's need to know his legal boundaries is just as critical as that of the public school administrator, but effective lessons for each would certainly not be identical.

Common law and contract laws govern both public and private schools. Because the legal arenas of public and private schools differ greatly, state universities have a unique opportunity, if not obligation, to adequately prepare all of their school administrators, private as well as public.

Financial Management

Creating and managing a budget is perhaps a very similar task for both public and non-public administrators. Each must have the skills to either oversee it or to complete it, depending on the size of the school. The notable difference, however, is that non-public administrators deal with the *entire* budget for every aspect of the school's function. A public school principal's budget would not include such enormous expenses as payroll, employee benefits, and new building construction. Juggling these large obligations poses possibly the most unique and challenging difference between public and private school financial administration. (Larriviere, 2001) While an administrator may have assistance from a business manager or part-time accountant, depending on the size of the school, he is still ultimately responsible for this immense task.

Other financial concerns for private school administrators which are either unique or of greater significance include a plethora of circumstances from collecting tuition delinquencies to raising thousands of dollars in contributions per year. Again, other personnel may or may not be employed to share these responsibilities.

Regardless, the administrator must have the skills for getting such things done. Ultimately, even more so than in any public school, the buck does stop on the principal's desk.

Goals

Through the results of their survey, Chubb and Moe found that public and private school principals report the pursuit of a distinctly different set of goals. (1985) Public schools, they say are obligated to educate everyone and therefore resort to a set of goals suited for universal education, such as literacy, citizenship, and specific occupational skills. Private school principals and teachers, on the other hand, reported their schools' goals as academic excellence, personal growth, self-esteem, and human relations skills such as the appreciation of other cultures. This they found to be consistent regardless of which "sector" of private school was responding. Policies are likewise set with these goals in mind—everything from amount of homework expected to discipline models used—and therefore reveal a great degree of variance between public and private schools and the administration thereof.

Private schools have the freedom to choose their environments to some extent, say Chubb and Moe, and are therefore able to select a set of goals, and deliver a different type of education for which there is a clear demand. Private schools cater to a market that public schools do not satisfy. Concerning themselves with market demand, private school administrators again seem to wear the hat of a small business operator.

Current Training

How well are today's non-public school administrators prepared? Of course the answer varies as widely as the diversity of the schools themselves. However, overall, university level graduate programs certainly play a much smaller roll in the preparation of the private school administrator than of the public administrator.

How well do private school administrators feel they were prepared? The findings of a 1998 study (Hughes, Johnson, Madjidi) suggest a critical need for training programs for private school administrators. The authors found that few private school administrators felt they had received adequate formal pre-service preparation for their jobs even though, they contend, the challenge of their

positions is at least as great as that of the beginning public school principal. Research indicates that a much smaller portion of private school administrators complete university level administrator preparation programs than do public school administrators. Further, administrators at private schools with enrollments of less than 200 are even less likely to have completed such a program.

Haller, Brian and McNamara, all professors of educational administration, in a 1997 study, questioned whether or not graduate training in Educational Administration had any positive influences over America's schools. Ultimately, they conclude that degrees in administration have little of no effect on the effectiveness of a school principal. While they seem to suggest dropping graduate training requirements for school administrators, we suggest that universities begin offering more effective training by broadening their scope to include the special administrative needs of private and parochial schools.

Ultimately, private school administrators are not trained by universities to deal with what will be their everyday responsibilities. Universities admittedly offer

graduate training programs which prepare students for public school administration.

Proposed reform

Haller, Brent and McNamara concluded that collectively, "graduate programs in educational administration seem to have little or no influence on the attributes that characterize effective schools." (1997) They suggest that the need for substantial changes in educational administration graduate programs is paramount. However, they raise the possibility that administrators may not benefit at all from such programs and therefore dropping any such requirements may be the best answer. At any rate, they feel that further attention to the efficacy of such programs would be in the best interest of American education. We agree with this notion. However, rather than dropping requirements for pre-service programs, we propose that programs be tailored into effective preparatory endeavors.

Universities that boast advanced degrees in education should assume their role as leaders in such reform. By offering alternative curricula or specialist degrees, they would target potential private school administrators and

therefore give private schools a new option for recruiting qualified personnel to run their institutions.

Given the diversity that exists among private school in terms of size and classification, a cookie-cutter approach to training curriculum would not be practical. Based on our research, there are three areas in which it would be most beneficial to offer alternative, specially designed coursework for those pursuing careers in private education.

First, courses designed for the exploration of school and community relations would be more effective if offered in two forms; giving students the option to study the vital communities of either public or private schools. Knowing your school's internal and external publics and your responsibility to each is critical to all administrators. However, relationships between the school, its school board, parents, teachers and even students are inherently different in the private school than in its public counterpart.

Second, it may be more beneficial for non-public administrators to enroll in business finance rather than school finance when a specially designed private school finance course is not available. It is critical to the

private school administrator that he is trained to manage his "business" from the ground up. If a special course were designed it might include other financial interests such as marketing, fundraising, and debt collection.

Finally, perhaps the most essential reform would call for a specially designed course in law for private schools. States publish a handbook or bulletin detailing guidelines for non-public schools. While these vary from state to state, they provide an excellent resource for state universities to explore legal boundaries with aspiring private school administrators.

Despite the apparent lack of official appropriate training, private school administrators are eventually quite effective in their positions.(Hughes, et al., 1999) These administrators are by their own admission, self-taught. Experienced successful private school administrators such as these might be persuaded by universities to share their knowledge and experience as instructors in new specially designed private school courses.

In light of the growing demand for private education, it seems appropriate that colleges and universities actively offer training opportunities to prepare young

administrators for the unique challenges they will face in non-public schools. Development of customized curricula or continuing education opportunities for non-public school administrators in areas of undeniable differences would be a good place to start. Further, superintendents and school boards of private schools should encourage administrators and potential administrators to participate in such training.

It is time that universities stop ignoring the existence of non-public schools. They've been around longer than public schools and clearly, they're not going anywhere but up.

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